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Inspection  
Service

**Wildlife  
Services**

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## WILDLIFE SERVICES—ARIZONA

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### USDA Resolves Wildlife Conflicts in Arizona

Every day, residents, industries, organizations and agencies call on Arizona Wildlife Services (WS) for help in protecting agriculture, human health and safety, natural resources, and property from damage or threats posed by wildlife. WS' professional wildlife biologists respond to these requests with effective, selective, and humane strategies to resolve wildlife conflicts.

WS works to protect property and reduce human health and safety risks in urban, suburban and rural settings such as airports and schools. The program also protects people, pets, and livestock from wildlife-borne diseases; guards many natural resources, such as pronghorn and fisheries from wildlife depredation; and educates the public about wildlife and wildlife damage management. Specific projects conducted by Arizona WS include, protecting endangered black-footed ferrets from predation and wildlife disease; conducting sampling and monitoring for West Nile virus and rabies; and managing damage caused by beavers, coyotes, mountain lions, pigeons, starlings, and other wildlife.



### Applying Science & Expertise to Wildlife Challenges

WS offers information, advice, equipment, and materials that enable many people to resolve wildlife conflicts on their own. Often, this *technical assistance* can be provided over the phone. WS also provides on-site expertise, or *direct assistance*, to manage complex wildlife problems that cannot be safely resolved by others. To support this effort, WS conducts *scientific research* across the Nation to develop answers to new problems posed by wildlife and to ensure the program benefits from the latest science and technology.

**Protecting Agricultural Crops**—Wildlife damage to agriculture crops comes in many forms. Wildlife Services is busy working with pecan and pistachio growers to manage damage to nuts by birds and mammals and to stop damage to irrigation lines by mammals. Wildlife Services is also working proactively with Maricopa County and citizen groups to prevent the large scale invasion of roof rats in the citrus industry.

**Protecting Livestock**—In addition to the many factors that can cause economic losses to livestock producers (disease, severe weather, etc.), predation is a serious concern. Coyotes, bears, mountain lions, and blackbirds cause significant losses to some producers by attacking sheep and cattle, spreading diseases, and consuming and contaminating feed. Unfortunately, these losses are felt most acutely by small farmers and ranchers. In Arizona and other western States, it is estimated

#### Top 5 Major Assistance Activities:

- Protecting livestock from coyote, black bear, mountain lion, Mexican gray wolf, and blackbird damage
- Protecting civil and military aviation from wildlife strikes
- Protecting public safety from coyotes and mountain lions
- Managing damage caused by ducks and geese
- Protecting the public, livestock, and wildlife from wildlife disease

#### Top 5 WS Research Projects of Interest to Arizona:

- Improving aquatic rodent damage management methods
- Defining and reducing wildlife hazards to aviation
- Defining and reducing carnivore damage to livestock
- Evaluating waterfowl as disease, parasite, and noxious weed reservoirs
- Managing wildlife transmission of rabies

that 75 percent of WS' cooperative agreements to manage damage are with small farmers and ranchers.

**Protecting Human Health and Safety at Airports**—Every year lives are endangered worldwide and billions of dollars are wasted when birds and other wildlife damage aircraft. Experts estimate that wildlife strikes with aircraft cost the U.S. civil aviation industry more than \$500 million annually. Arizona has the fifth busiest airport in the United States, having processed nearly 37 million passengers last year. WS biologists provide both technical assistance and direct assistance at airports across the State to protect aircraft and public safety.

**Protecting Pronghorn Fawns from Predation by Coyotes**—Ordinarily, populations of predators and their prey develop some static balance within the environment. Changes to the environment, however, caused by man or natural phenomenon like fires, can disrupt that balance so that one species suppresses another. Many endangered species are affected either by predation or competition from other, more successful wildlife species. Arizona, like many western states, has sparse pronghorn populations despite an abundance of habitat. In some areas, their numbers are not increasing rapidly enough to sustain population levels. In other parts of the State, predation has severely limited opportunities to restore wildlife populations, such as black-footed ferrets and bighorn sheep. Using research findings and methods developments, the Arizona WS program has teamed up with the Arizona Game and Fish Department on efforts to protect native wildlife from predation. In areas where pronghorn herds are suffering from excessive fawn predation, WS works with the State wildlife agency to increase survival rates through selective coyote removal.



**Major Cooperators:**

- U.S. Air Force
- Arizona County Governments
- Arizona Game and Fish Department
- Arizona Pistachio Growers
- Arizona Department of Agriculture
- City of Phoenix
- City of Tempe
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- White Mountain Apache Tribe
- Arizona Sheep Producers

**Looking to the Future**

In Arizona, public safety is a concern for wildlife managers. This is particularly true at airports. Additional attention must be given to this very specialized area of work.

A second issue related to public safety and economic loss involves the increased need to monitor and manage disease threats due to bioterrorism and borderland security. Attacks on people with bioterrorism agents, and the number of illegal immigrants has increased the public's awareness of this issue

The State also has a need to manage the transmission and spread of skunk rabies. Arizona WS is currently preparing to participate in our national effort to develop vaccines and application materials, and, hopefully, to eliminate rabies from the United States.

Another issue tapping WS' resources is the growing Mexican gray wolf population. Reestablished after becoming extinct in Arizona, Mexican wolves continue to spread outside of the reintroduction area. Natural reproductions also occurring within the reintroduced packs. The increased demand for WS' assistance in addressing depredation complaints, makes it difficult to respond to the number of requests.

**Arizona Wildlife Services Funding**

In addition to receiving federally allocated funds, WS also receives money from cooperators; such as producers; private individuals; businesses; and other Federal, State, Tribal and Local government agencies who have a vested interest in the program. In most cases, these cooperators need help to resolve wildlife damage problems or they play a role in wildlife damage management.

